

own dispassionate reasoning, either in solitude, or weighing within ourselves, dispassionately, what we hear from others, standing unconvicted in argument ourselves. It was one of the rules which, above all others, made Dr. Franklin the most amiable of men in society, "Never to contradict anybody." If he was urged to announce an opinion he did it rather by asking questions, as if for information or by suggesting doubts. When I hear another express an opinion which is not mine, I say to myself, he has a right to his opinion, as I to mine; why should I question it? If my error does me no injury, and shall I become a Don Quixote to bring all men by force of argument to one opinion? If a fact be misstated, it is probable he is gratified by the belief of it, and I have no right to deprive him of the gratification. If he wants reformation he will ask it, and then I will give it in measured terms; but if he still believes his own story, and shows a desire to dispute the fact with me, I hear him and say nothing. It is his affair, not mine, if he prefers error.

There are two classes of disputants most frequently to be met with among us. The first is of young students, just entered the threshold of science, with a first view of its outlines, not yet filled up with the details and modifications which a further progress would bring to their knowledge. The other consists of the ill-tempered and rude men in society, who have taken up a passion for politics. (Hood humor and politeness never introduce into a mixed society a question on which they foresee there will be a difference of opinion.) I'dom both of these classes of disputants, my dear Jefferson, keep aloof as you would from the infected subjects of yellow fever or pestilence. Consider yourself when with them as among the patients of Bedlam, needing medical more than moral counsel. Be a listener only, keep within yourself, and endeavor to establish with yourself the habit of silence, especially in politics. In the fevered state of our country no good can ever result from any attempt to set one of these fiery zealots to rights, either in fact or principle. They are determined as to the facts they will believe and the